Title: Bach Lumber Yard In Business for 72 Years

By: Dale C. Maley
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Many Fairbury homes were built using lumber from the Bach lumber yard. The story of this lumber yard started with John Nicholas Bach's birth in 1871 at Voellerdingen in Alsace Loraine. He was the son of Nicholas Bach and Caroline Meiss. J. N. Bach came to America in 1880 and first settled in Nebraska. He then moved to Fairbury in 1890 and married Miss Lydia Von Tobel in 1897. John and Caroline had nine children.

J. N. Bach first worked for Walton Brothers. He then entered the lumber business working for Jesse Stevens at the Cornish Lumber Company. He then worked for his father-in-law, Jacob Von Tobel, at his lumber yard. Von Tobel's lumberyard was where Veterans Memorial Park is now located. Von Tobel decided to retire and sold his lumberyard to Jesse Stevens. Jesse tore down the buildings and moved the lumber to his yard at the southwest corner of First and Locust Streets south of the tracks.

In June of 1901, J. N. Bach started up his own company, and his lumberyard was at the southwest corner of Seventh and Locust Streets. In 1926, J. N. Bach improved his lumberyard. He jacked up and moved the old office further south on Seventh Street. He put up a new building with a 56 foot long front with a stucco finish. The new building had a central office, a private office, and display rooms for hardware, paint, sash, and doors.

The oldest son of J. N. Bach was Alfred Erwin Bach, born in 1898 in Fairbury. He graduated from Fairbury Township High School in 1916. He then attended the University of Illinois and was drafted into U.S. Navy in WWI in October of 1918 at Urbana, Illinois. He was discharged in December of 1918 at Urbana. He married Mabel Brooks of Paxton in November of 1918. Alfred was then the manager of the Fred A. Smith Lumber Company in Buckley. He later was associated with the State of Illinois Department of Architecture at Springfield. He was also employed with the University of Illinois architectural department. He moved to Florida and died there in 1970.

Unfortunately, J. N. Bach's lumberyard burned to the ground in September of 1929. It was a massive fire, and the intense heat kept the Fairbury Fire Department from getting close to the blaze. The estimated loss was over $50,000. J. N. Bach only had fire insurance to cover one-third of the damage. $50,000 in 1929 would be equivalent to $758,000 in today's dollars.

Fortunately for Fairbury, J. N. Bach decided to rebuild his lumberyard. J. N. Bach first bought the adjacent Schnetzler-Dailey Lumber Company building and yard. The purchase of an existing building got him back into business quickly. J. N. Bach then proceeded to erect new buildings and an office where the fire was.

In 1938, J. N. Bach changed his lumberyard business from a sole proprietor to a partnership with his four sons. The four sons and their ages at that time were Harry Bach, 34, Clarence Bach, 28, J. N. Bach Jr., 25, and Robert A. Bach, age 23.

The Japanese bombed the American fleet in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941. This event marked the entry of the United States into World War II. Robert A. Bach entered the U.S. Army Infantry in March of 1941, nine months before the war started. He served in the European Theatre and was killed in February of 1945 at Klientorsdolf, Germany. He was a Technical Sergeant and received a Purple Heart. Robert A. Bach was only 30 years old when he was killed in WWII.

In 1962, J. N. Bach Jr. took his first trip to Canada to open the Boy Scout camp on a small lake. He and other Scout leaders swept out the cabins, repaired damaged machinery, and cleared out the brush. At summer's end, J. N. Bach Jr. would go back north and close up the camp. Ironically, J. N. Bach Jr. was never a Boy Scout, although his sons were for a short time.

J. N. Bach Sr. died in 1951 at the age of 79. His three sons continued to operate the lumberyard after his death. In 1973, the three brothers were nearing retirement. Harry Bach was 69, Clarence Bach was 63, and J. N. Bach Jr. was 60 years of age.

J. N. Bach & Sons discontinued business on its 72nd anniversary in July of 1973. The lumberyard was sold to Sam Hoffman, a former employee of Mr. Timber. Sam Hoffman operated the lumberyard until he closed it in 1984. The building was converted to rental storage spaces and still stands today.

In 1995, J. N. Bach Jr. was honored by the Canadian government when they named a small bay after him. Bach Bay is about three square miles in size and is nestled off Clearwater Lake in Ontario. It was the home of a Boy Scout camp operated by the Central Illinois W. D. Boyce Council. Several Scout officials, including Chairman Lyle Honegger of Fairbury, pressed the Ontario Ministry of National Resources for the designation.

Harry Bach died in 1983 when he was 69 years old. Clarence Bach was 63 years old when he died in 1983. J. N. Bach Jr. was 95 years old when he died in 2008.

The Bach family had one member who served in WWI and another member who gave his life in World War II. They operated a lumberyard for 72 years at the southwest corner of Seventh and Locust Streets. Their old lumberyard building still stands today and is a rental storage space facility.

The former Bach lumber yard located at the southwest corner of Locust and Seventh Streets.